DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 332 SP 034 756

AUTHOR Thomas, Jan
TITLE Teachers of the Year Speak Out: Key Issues in Teacher Professionalization. Policy Brief.
INSTITUTION SERVE: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jul 93
CONTRACT RP91002010
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Leadership Qualities; Participative Decision Making; Policy Formation; *Preservice Teacher Education; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Persistence; Teacher Recruitment; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Outstanding Teachers; Professionalization of Teaching; Reform Efforts; Teacher Needs

ABSTRACT

This policy brief presents a discussion of what needs to be done to empower, attract, and retain good teachers. Consistent with educational reform efforts, the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) invited the 1992 and 1993 Outstanding Teachers of the Year from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina to meet as an ongoing Advisory Council for the purpose of focusing on issues related to teacher education and professionalization. The six topics of discussion that emerged during the meetings are discussed. These topics are: (1) characteristics of innovative teachers; (2) needs of teachers; (3) leadership development; (4) change strategies; (5) preservice teacher education; and (6) continuing professional development. Since policymakers can play a strategic role in supporting teacher recruitment and retention, suggestions for professional development, decision making, working conditions, and funding are provided. (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 361 332

TEACHERS OF THE YEAR SPEAK OUT:
KEY ISSUES IN TEACHER PROFESSIONALIZATION

by

Jan Thomas, Ph. D.

SERVE: Southern Regional Vision for Education

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 034 156

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SERVE
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education

Policy Brief

Teachers of the Year Speak Out: Key Issues in Teacher Professionalization

July 1993

Jan Thomas, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

As the educational reform movement brings about changes in the way we teach, it is apparent that the future quality of our educational system will depend upon the effectiveness of teachers currently in the system and those training to become teachers. The issues of teacher recruitment and retention present major challenges, particularly in the South, where our current teaching force is declining due to teachers retiring or changing careers and fewer people entering the profession. Compounding the dilemma is an increase in high school enrollment, estimated by the U.S. Department of Education's *Projections of Education Statistics to 2003* to grow by 25 percent in the next ten years 2003 (1989, p. 3).

Teachers leaving the profession, student enrollment growth, tight school budgets, and other factors illustrate the imperative for attracting and retaining good teachers. What will it take to keep good teachers and attract the brightest young people to the teaching profession? According to the 1991 Metropolitan Life Survey of teachers, "While most teachers (53%) say greater respect for their profession would exert a major impact on keeping them in teaching, more involvement in decision-making also receives a high (51%) priority" (p. 5).

SERVE invited the 1992 and 1993 Teachers of the Year from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina to meet as an ongoing Advisory Council to the laboratory. The first two meetings of the Council have focused on issues related to teacher education and professionalization. Six topics of discussion emerged during the meetings and are discussed below.

TOPIC 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATIVE TEACHERS

Innovative teachers are willing to take risks, try new things, and do what is needed to create schools for the future. The 12 teachers on SERVE's Teacher Advisory Council personify the characteristics of innovative teachers. When asked to describe what makes an innovative teacher, they quickly generated an interesting and valuable profile of the kind of teachers we will need to move schools toward achieving our national goals for education. These teachers must be

- Altruistic—compassionate and idealistic
- Collaborative/Cooperative—available to students and other teachers, supportive, able to coordinate and facilitate
- Creative/Open-minded—non-bureaucratic
- Capable of Critical Thinking—problem solvers and planners
- Determined/Persistent—motivated and focused on needs
- Driven by Chance of Success—aggressive
- Able to Communicate Effectively—persuasive
- Capable as Leaders/Role Models—respected by other teachers, trustworthy, and reliable—"movers and shakers"
- Dedicated to Learning—curious and observant, reflective, holistic
- Optimistic and Positive—exciting and excited, having a sense of humor
- Professionally Competent—well-read, aware of cutting-edge issues
- Resourceful/Practical—efficient managers, reality-based marketers
- Self-confident/Secure—risk-takers
- Unique
- Visionary/Futuristic—dreamers and doers

In summary, innovative teachers must be able to "leap tall buildings in a single bound"—and the Teacher Advisory Council mentioned that the ability to go without sleep helps immensely!

TOPIC 2: NEEDS OF TEACHERS

For teachers to be able to perform at optimum levels, certain basic needs of teachers must be met; the Teacher Advisory Council identified seven needs. In priority order, the list includes time, student needs, leadership development, direct

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

communication, teacher recognition, participation in decision making, and teaching tools.

- **Time** includes scheduled time for teachers to learn new roles, to be leaders (see topic three), and to be learners (see topic six).
- **Student needs** should drive school decisions. The teachers stressed the need to recognize the diversity of communities and to make school decisions that take into account individual and community differences.
- **Leadership development** for teachers includes a variety of areas, ranging from training in public relations skills to training in facilitative leadership (see topic three) and how to be change agents.
- Through direct **communications,** teachers can be kept informed and involved in policy decisions that affect them. Upcoming issues need to be discussed with teachers so they can prepare for and participate in any changes that may have an impact on them.
- Substantive **teacher recognition** should be given for high-quality work. The Teacher Advisory Council emphasized this recognition need not be monetary rewards so much as inclusion on decision-making committees such as those for curricula, textbooks, budgeting, and the hiring of new teachers.
- Teachers need to **participate in both policy and budget decisions.** Often, those closest to the problems and issues are neglected when decisions concerning them are made. Teachers expressed a desire to be included in these discussions.
- Performing to capacity is difficult without the tools of one's trade. Teachers need **teaching tools** such as computers and software, professional development programs, and up-to-date materials.

If we are to attract, keep, and continue to upgrade the skills of high-performing, motivated teachers, it seems sensible and rational to do all we can to meet these basic needs.

TOPIC 3: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development for teachers was identified by the Teacher Advisory Council as a high priority. Leadership development must include training in the kinds of skills teachers will need as they assume new roles. Twenty skills were identified by the Teachers of the Year. These skills fall primarily into three major areas (see next column):

1. ***LEADERSHIP SKILLS***
- Conducting workshops for peers
- Removing constraints to effective teaching
- Delegating skills training
- Developing and sharing vision—helping others see the big picture
- Focusing energy and vision
- Mentoring
- Taking risks
- Facilitating—teachers as facilitators of learning

2. ***COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS***
- Communicating effectively
- Marketing
- Persuading—making logical arguments
- Conducting public relations—dealing with media and businesses
- Writing grants/raising funds

3. ***TEAM BUILDING/DECISION MAKING***
- Conflict-management
- Consensus building
- Networking
- Problem-solving/decision making
- Sharing ownership—supporting others
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Understanding group dynamics/leadership styles

TOPIC 4: CHANGE STRATEGIES

Many articles have been written recently concerning the subject of change. The "change" literature makes it clear that teachers, in order to function effectively, must become change agents. Michael G. Fullan, in the March 1993 issue of *Educational Leadership*, identified "four core capacities for building greater change capacity: personal vision-building, inquiry, mastery, and collaboration" (p. 12). Most of the 11 "essential ingredients" for teacher change identified by the Teacher Advisory Council can be grouped under these headings.

PERSONAL VISION-BUILDING

Personal vision-building is internal questioning that helps individuals arrive at their own conclusions about the importance of what they are doing and the direction their careers will take. Block tells us that "creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future" (1987, p. 102). The Teacher Advisory Council identified two factors related to personal vision-building (see next page):

- Motivation—feeling the need to do something different
- Belief—conviction that change
  - will make things better
  - will benefit teachers or their students
  - is worth the effort

INQUIRY

Inquiry involves continuous questioning and learning. As explained by Fullan (1993), inquiry is necessary for forming and reforming personal purpose. While the latter comes from within, it must be "fueled by information and ideas in the environment" (p. 13). In order for inquiry to occur, the Teacher Advisory Council believes two essential things must be in place:

- Access to innovators
- Discourse about change to address fears and concerns

MASTERY

Mastery is crucial to the process of becoming a change agent. It is an ongoing quest that involves long-term commitment to professional development. As our Teachers of the Year have pointed out, mastery cannot be developed through one-shot workshops, faculty meetings, or a hodgepodge of unrelated seminars on topics irrelevant to teachers' work. As Fullan says, "beyond exposure to new ideas, we have to know where they fit, and we have to become skilled in them, not just like them" (1993, p. 14). In order for this to happen, our teacher group believes the following ingredients are key:

- Time—We must allow time to
  - experiment and reflect
  - field test what works
  - collect information needed for change
- Opportunity to learn from trial experience
- Understanding that performance may decline while we are learning a new skill

COLLABORATION

Although much of what has been discussed concerning change strategies has related to personal or individual factors, we know that there are limits to what we can do on our own. Fullan (1993) explains that "personal and group mastery thrive on each other in learning organizations" (p. 14). Collaboration has become critical to achieving the goals we have set for education. The Teacher Advisory Council identified two elements that must be present in order for true collaboration to take place:

- Trust of the change advocate and peers
- Nurturing through mutual support

OTHER

In addition to the four characteristics essential for teacher change identified by Fullan, SERVE's teachers stated that two other ingredients were essential. These were

- Prospect for positive reward
- Respect and recognition as a professional

TOPIC 5: PRESERVICE EDUCATION

An interesting phenomenon in the education community is the expectation of employers and the public that "teachers emerge from their preservice training fully and forevermore responsive, responsible, rational, adaptable, intellectually curious, vigorous, compassionate, imaginative, and open-minded" (Moran, 1991, p. 211). This is indeed a large order for preservice programs to fill. In order to live up to such expectations as much as possible, preservice programs must be responsive to the key issues new teachers will be expected to confront in the "real" world.

SERVE's Teacher Advisory Council members identified characteristics of their preservice teacher education programs that they felt were the *most* and *least* significant in preparing them for their role in the classroom. The seven *most* significant characteristics were

1. Professors who modeled effective teaching
2. Arts and science courses that focused on subject matter content rather than education content
3. "Hands-on" learning opportunities
4. Experiences in schools early in their preservice program
5. Courses that mixed theory and practice
6. Opportunities to experience the beginning of a school year
7. Experiences at several grade levels

Additional characteristics that were experienced by a few of the teachers and felt to be valuable were

- Opportunities to learn by using videotape technology
- Internships that lasted one year or more
- A holistic approach to teaching and learning
- Use of a "buddy system" during the learning program
- Courses in human development

These teachers also identified a number of experiences that were *least* significant and detracted from preservice training:

- Professors who had not recently been in elementary or secondary school classrooms and so lacked understanding of the issues faced in today's classrooms
- Education philosophy courses that were taught too early in the program and contained topics that would have been more meaningful after having in-school experience
- Classes with no real content

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Learning that focused on memory rather than thinking and problem solving
- Activities that had no practical value
- Methods classes
- Courses that had a narrow focus, as when professors used books they had written as the only text

Related to the area of preservice education is the issue of the performance of first-year teachers. The Teachers of the Year identified a number of deficits they had observed in the knowledge and preparation of new teachers:

- Technology—how it works and how to use it instructionally
- Legal knowledge related to teacher and school liability
- Content knowledge
- Ability to respond to the whole child
- Alternative approaches to classroom management
- Ability to teach students from diverse cultures
- Interdisciplinary/integrated instructional approaches
- Individualized teaching based on learning styles
- Identification of children with special needs
- Trends in education and available resources
- Knowledge of the "real world" of how schools are run
- Ability to work with parents

It is apparent from these lists that teachers must receive training beyond basic subject area content and pedagogy. Basic understandings of humanity, the development of nurturing skills, creative ways of dealing with individual differences, the ability to solve problems—these are the preservice skills teachers need to learn.

TOPIC 6: CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rapid changes in approaches to education can quickly result in ineffective classroom methods and an unprepared work force. The continual training and professional development of working teachers is critical to the success of reform efforts. One-shot workshops or after-school inservice sessions will not provide the kind of training needed to empower teachers and allow them to enhance and expand existing skills and knowledge. Effective inservice programs, however, result in caring, committed teachers who are knowledgeable of the content of their disciplines. The SERVE Teacher Advisory Council identified several significant characteristics of effective professional development programs; these characteristics are discussed below.

RELEVANCE

Teaching the students of today to be prepared for tomorrow requires a different kind of teaching than we are now providing. Professional development programs for practicing teachers must be designed to give them skills relevant to today's needs. If we continue to provide programs that further reinforce the same kind of teaching we already have—teaching that "encourages students to work in isolation and compete with one another, to learn discrete facts and skills rather than to solve complex problems, and to follow fixed routines rather than to experiment with novel tasks" (Kennedy, 1991, p. 661) — we are doomed to repeat past mistakes. Relevant professional development programs will train teachers to help students solve "real-life" problems, to work collaboratively in teams, and to learn flexibility and inventive approaches to tasks.

NEEDS-BASED

Decisions about teacher inservice programs are often made in the district office. The Teacher Advisory Council stressed the need for involving teachers in the selection of their own professional development programs. Teachers know best what their expertise and needs are. Giving teachers greater responsibility for their own learning and allowing them to choose the new knowledge and skills they wish to acquire, based on the needs they see in themselves and their students, contributes to their perceptions of themselves as professionals. When inservice programs are based on needs identified by teachers rather than administrators, teachers can, states Maeroff, "break down isolation and build networks, bolster confidence, increase knowledge of subject matter and of pedagogy, provide the kinds of learning that fires enthusiasm, and involve [themselves] in the kinds of projects that provide access to decision making" (1988, p. 474).

RELEASE TIME

Numerous national inservice programs developed for teachers by such organizations as the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Carnegie Corporation have provided information about the overwhelming importance of release time as part of any successful teacher professional development model. As noted by Maeroff (1988), "In the programs that were most successful, teachers were paid to spend time learning in intensive summer sessions, and their learning was reinforced by activities throughout the school year for which they were given released time" (p. 474).

If we truly believe that professional teacher development is critical to bringing about change, we must find ways to move it from the current status of an "add-on," an extra burden, or an irrelevant activity to fulfill externally imposed requirements. It must become a prestigious, sought-after—perhaps even competitive—and most of all, valued, activity. Providing release time during the work day, compensating teachers for summer or other free-time participation, and holding retreats are just some of the ways these activities could be structured to provide

teachers an opportunity to meet and learn together free of the day-to-day responsibilities they face.

MENTORING AND COACHING

In the 1991 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 46 percent of the teachers surveyed responded to the question, "What would help teachers be more effective?" with the response, "a skilled, experienced teacher assigned to provide advice and assistance (p. 3)." According to Maeroff (1988), when teachers are participating in professional development programs designed to assist their efforts as change agents, the support structure of other teachers becomes an even more important element: new knowledge and fresh applications are most likely to take hold in a school in which a group of teachers are similarly enthusiastic about those ideas and bond together. They can "turn to one another for the support and encouragement that is so often missing from teachers' professional lives" (pp. 475-476).

Mentoring and coaching can be provided by experienced teachers who guide and inspire new teachers or by support systems made up of new teachers who meet together in pairs or groups to talk about problems and celebrate successes. In either case, the benefits in terms of professional growth flow both ways.

In addition to the four characteristics of *effective* inservice programs, several characteristics of a professional development training program were identified by the Teacher Advisory Council as *detrimental* to the effectiveness of the program.

These were

- One-shot workshops with no follow-up
- Instruction that was purely theoretical and included no practical content
- Activities that they were required to attend and had no choice about regardless of their relevance to individual teachers' needs
- A requirement of more paperwork
- Poor timing, such as inservice training presented at a long faculty meeting
- Workshops that suggested lack of trust, lack of respect, or lack of teacher professionalism

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CONCLUSIONS

Preparing the teaching profession for an era of massive change is an issue that goes hand-in-hand with major educational reform efforts currently underway. SERVE's Teacher Advisory Council is a group of highly motivated, excited, and exciting teachers who have expressed what they think needs to be done to empower themselves and their colleagues to live up to the challenges that lie ahead.

Policymakers can play a strategic role in supporting teacher recruitment and retention. The suggestions below address the areas of professional development, decision making/working conditions, and funding.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Invest in professional development activities for teachers. Any business attempting major restructuring invests heavily in retraining its work force.
- Insist that teachers have a significant voice in designing professional development activities.
- Develop policies that stimulate colleges, universities, and locally run staff development centers to thoroughly examine programs to ensure appropriateness and to provide teachers opportunities for continuing professional development.
- Provide for cross-sector articulation and feedback between university colleges of education and schools hiring new graduates.

DECISION MAKING/WORKING CONDITIONS

- Seek teacher input on policy issues and allow teachers authority in decisions relevant to their profession. As the ones who work most closely with students, teachers bring perspectives no one else can offer.
- Place a major share of the decision making about curriculum, instructional strategies, instructional materials, personnel, and resource allocation at the school level and assure that teachers are involved in making these and other decisions that affect them.
- As school reform efforts take shape, build in release time for the additional work teachers will be doing. Teachers cannot be expected to assume new leadership roles without being given support and time to do so.
- Assure that teachers have the basic tools of their trade; up-to-date textbooks, modern technology, adequate supplies and buildings that allow for innovative teaching techniques are critical.

FUNDING

- Review state and federal regulations that are tied to funding to see if restrictions on the use of funds limit teachers' ability to improve programs and educational outcomes.
- Provide salaries that will attract a strong pool of applicants and will keep experienced teachers in the field.
- Provide incentives for teachers. These may take the forms of public awards, financial bonuses, or policies that give teachers the power and support to make decisions that will increase their intrinsic motivation.

REFERENCES

Block, P. (1987). *The empowered manager*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (1993). Why teachers must become change agents. *Educational Leadership, 20*(6), 12-17.

Gerald, D. E., Horn, P.J., & Hussar, W.J. (1989). *Projections of education statistics to 2003*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Kennedy, M. M. (1991). Policy issues in teacher education. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 659-665.

Louis Harris and Associates. (1991). *Metropolitan life survey of the American teacher*. New York: Author.

Maeroff, G. I. (1988). A blueprint for empowering teachers. *Phi Delta Kappan. 69*, 473-477.

Moran, S. W. (1990). Schools and the beginning teacher. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 210-213.

TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The members of SERVE's Teacher Advisory Council are

Alabama – Mike Jones, Penelope Moore

Florida – Tracey Bailey,* Kathleen K. Huie

Georgia – Sue Ellen Cain, Jeffrey L. White

Mississippi – Mary Davidson, Betty Whitlock

North Carolina – Dixie Abernathy, Annie Pegram

South Carolina – Jeanne C. Sink, Nancy C. Townsend, Dodie McGill

*National Teacher of the Year for 1992-1993

SERVE would like to express appreciation to Dr. Richard Thompson of the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching for launching the Teacher Advisory Council enterprise at the Center. Dr. Thompson's efforts in initiating the program and in chairing the meetings are greatly appreciated.

For additional information about the Teacher Advisory Council and their work or about the Center for the Advancement of Teaching, please contact Dr. Thompson at (704) 293-5202.

New SERVE Products

Publications

☞ ***Hot Topics. Appreciating Differences: Teaching and Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom***

Revised and updated for 1993. Shows teachers how to become more sensitive and responsive to the needs of students of different cultures and how to enrich education by infusing instruction with a multicultural perspective. Several dozen ready-to-use activities and examples of successful school programs are included as well as lists of helpful organizations, contacts, and publications. (105 pages, $7)

☞ ***Hot Topics. Children Exposed to Drugs: Meeting Their Needs***

The latest research- and classroom practice-based information and strategies on assisting and educating children who have been prenatally or environmentally exposed to cocaine, alcohol, or other drugs. Teachers and other service providers are offered examples of activities for working with substance-exposed children and their families. An extensive list of resource organizations and contacts for further information is provided. (120 pages, $7)

☞ ***Policy Brief. Children Exposed to Drugs: What Policymakers Can Do***

A discussion of the impact of prenatal and environmental exposure to drugs on children and the ways in which the education system is responding to the problems. Societal and educational consequences of drug exposure, service delivery issues, and policy considerations with related recommendations at the national, state, and local levels are explored. (8 pages, $1)

☞ ***Policy Brief. Teachers of the Year Speak out: Key Issues in Teacher Professionalization***

Teachers of the Year in the Southeast were brought together to discuss key issues in teacher professionalization. Their discussions and suggestions, along with policy implications, are summarized in this policy brief. The areas addressed characteristics of innovative teachers, needs of teachers, leadership development, change strategies, preservice education, and continuing professional development. (8 pages, $1)

☞ ***SERVE Report. How to Assess Student Performance in Science: Going Beyond Multiple-Choice Tests***

This publication provides science teachers with practical information on ways to use alternative assessment methods in the classroom. Clarification and examples of assessment methods, rubrics, and grading methods are provided. (68 pages, $7)

Videotape

Passages: Providing Continuity from Preschool to School

This videotape takes a look at eight key components of programs that are effective in providing continuous services for young children and their families. Filmed on location at several schools that exemplify these continuity components, it highlights the effectiveness of these components and demonstrates the positive impact that interagency collaborative efforts can have on young children's success in school. (VHS, 30 min., $19.95)

ORDER INFORMATION

Prefix (❑ Mr. ❑ Mrs. ❑ Ms. ❑ Dr.) First Name MI Last Name

Position/Title

Organization

Address

City State Zip + 4 County

Phone (❑ Home ❑ Work) VoiceMail E-Mail/Internet Address SunCom

TO ORDER: Make check or purchase order to NEFEC/SERVE (Federal ID# 59-6000-821). Remove or copy this order form and send it with your check or purchase order to: NEFEC/SERVE, Route 1, Box 8500, 3841 Reid Street, Palatka, FL 32177. Non-exempt Florida residents must include 6% sales tax. Exemption # _____.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

About the SERVE laboratory . . .

SERVE–the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education–is the educational improvement laboratory for the Southeast, operating under contract with the U.S. Department of Education. The laboratory serves Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. SERVE's goals are to address critical issues in the region, work as a catalyst for positive research and practice, and become an invaluable source of information for organizations working to promote systemic educational improvement.

For more information, please call the SERVE field office nearest you:

Greensboro, N.C. (800)755-3277

Tallahassee, Fla. (800)352-6001

Atlanta, Ga. (800)659-3204

Cleveland, Miss. (800)326-4548

This document was produced with funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RP91002010.

345 South Magnolia Drive
Suite D-23
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2950